

Learning from Goats

By Scott Higgins

RESOURCE 2: Story/Illustration

One of the famous characteristics of goats is their irritability. I don't know if it's true of all goats, but it's certainly true of mountain goats in the Rockies. These goats are so prickly that if they stay in close proximity they not only hurt each other, but have even been known to kill their neighbour.

As puzzling as this behaviour may seem to us, there is a good reason for it. Mountain goats live in areas where there is a very limited food supply. If they were to live in groups they'd all end up dying as none would get enough to eat.

It can be the same with people. Often their behaviour is puzzling to us, sometimes downright offensive. They can be cold, prickly, irritable, and harsh. Yet if we take the time to look we'll find that there are usually reasons why people are like this - perhaps they've been hurt themselves, perhaps they're dealing with great stresses. But whatever the reason there is a reason for their prickliness. Unlike goats however, it's not healthy for us humans to live apart, and perhaps we need to explore our own prickliness and reach out lovingly to those who are so prickly.

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